



Research Article

Foundations and Frameworks of ELT and Applied Linguistics Research: Principles, Processes and Practices

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Abstract

This paper offers a comprehensive analysis of the core principles, processes, and practices that characterize research in English Language Teaching (ELT) and Applied Linguistics. The article highlights the key distinctions between scholarship, aimed at personal knowledge acquisition, and research, which generates socially useful knowledge. Research in applied linguistics is problem-oriented, focusing on addressing practical language-related challenges such as language acquisition, teaching methodologies, and multilingual communication. The paper emphasizes the interdisciplinary nature of applied linguistics, integrating insights from fields like psychology, sociology, and computer science to provide comprehensive solutions. Methodological diversity is a hallmark of this research, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative approaches, including case studies, surveys, and experimental studies. The research cycle, from identifying a problem to collecting and analyzing data, is systematically outlined. Key areas of ELT research—such as second language acquisition, curriculum development, and language assessment—are discussed, underscoring the field's contributions to both theory and practice. The article concludes by emphasizing the importance of applying research findings to improve language education, develop policies, and enhance communication across diverse linguistic contexts.

Introduction

Research is a means of exploring the unknown. While this broad interpretation suggests that everyone engages in research, Brew (1999, p. 299) offers a more precise definition, stating that "Research . . . has as its primary purpose the generation of socially useful knowledge." The key distinction between scholarship and research lies in their purpose: scholarship focuses on the acquisition of

personally useful knowledge, while research aims to generate socially useful knowledge. Scholarship benefits the individual scholar, whereas research is conducted for the benefit of a broader community. Research involves the systematic investigation of the unknown, with the goal of addressing socially relevant issues. It informs both practice and scholarship by contributing new insights. As a systematic process, research involves the collection,

analysis, and interpretation of data to enhance our understanding of a particular phenomenon. In everyday life, individuals often use a systematic approach to gather and interpret information when solving routine problems. "Research is a process of steps used to collect and analyze information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue. At a general level, research consists of three steps: 1) Pose a question 2) Collect data to answer the question 3) Present an answer to the question" (Creswell, 2016, p.3). Best and Kahn (2012, p. 25) define research as "the systematic and objective analysis and recording of controlled observations that may lead to the development of generalizations, principles, or theories, resulting in predication and possibly ultimate control of events." In the similar vein, Gay *et al.* (2017, p.5) state that "Research is the formal, systematic application of the scientific method to the study of problems. The goal of educational research is essentially the same as the goal of all science: to describe, explain, predict, or control phenomena." Building on this, Sekaran and Bougie (2013) emphasize that research is an organized, systematic, data-based, critical, scientific enquiry or investigation into a specific problem. They stress that the objective of such endeavors is to find answers or solutions to the identified problem. Further aligning with these perspectives, Kerlinger (1986) characterizes scientific research as a "systematic, controlled, empirical, and critical investigation of propositions about the presumed relationships among various phenomena."

Research in ELT and Applied Linguistics

Applied Linguistics is an interdisciplinary field that aims to understand, analyze, and address real-world language-related challenges through systematic and empirical research. It covers a wide range of language phenomena, such as language teaching, language policy, translation, and language assessment. The core objective of applied linguistics is to apply linguistic theories, methods, and findings to practical problems in society, education, and communication. Within this field, numerous sub-disciplines exist, including first and second language acquisition (FLA/SLA), language teaching, language testing and assessment, world Englishes, and critical applied linguistics. Each sub-field poses distinct research questions and utilizes specific research methodologies to explore these questions.

A key feature of applied linguistics research is its emphasis on solving practical language issues. As Brumfit (2001) highlights, applied linguistics is inherently problem-focused, striving to resolve challenges such as language acquisition, language loss, and the effectiveness of various teaching approaches. This research frequently involves interdisciplinary collaboration, incorporating perspectives from psychology, sociology, education, and computer science to deepen understanding and improve the application of linguistic knowledge. Furthermore, applied

linguistics research is characterized by methodological diversity. Researchers employ both qualitative and quantitative approaches, including case studies, surveys, experimental studies, and ethnographic research, providing a comprehensive framework for examining language use across different contexts.

Research in applied linguistics involves systematic inquiry aimed at acquiring knowledge and insights into language-related issues and challenges. It integrates linguistic theory with practical applications to tackle real-world language problems. Applied linguistics research can be defined as a structured investigation designed to describe, explain, predict, and address observed phenomena. Both inductive and deductive research methods are utilized: inductive methods, often associated with qualitative research, are used to explore observed events, while deductive methods, typically linked to quantitative research, are employed to test and verify these observations.

Research on teaching the English language is a planned, methodical exploration of some aspect of language teaching and learning. Regardless of the nature of the question or problem the researcher is investigating, researchers plan what they are going to do and proceed by systematically gathering data of some kind to address the question or problem.

1. Research is a systematic process of inquiry consisting of three elements or components: (1) a question, problem or hypothesis; (2) data; and (3) analysis; and interpretation of data (Nunan, 1992, p. 3).
2. Research is the organized, systematic search for answers to the questions we ask (Hatch & Lazaraton 1991, p.1).
3. Research' simply means trying to find answers to questions, an activity every one of us does all the time to learn more about the world around us (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 15).

The above definitions are useful to help conceptualize what is involved in research. For the purpose of this chapter, research in applied linguistics can be defined as an investigation, examination or inquiry that requires planning, organizing and ethical considerations as well as systematic and careful analysis of data, sound interpretations and conclusions on the basis of evidence and inferences being made. To unpack this definition:

Investigation involves paying close, meticulous attention to every stage of the research process, from the beginning to the end. This level of care is essential to avoid errors during data collection and interpretation. Planning and organizing are equally important, as they require identifying valuable research questions, evaluating how these questions have

been previously studied, and determining the rationale and methods for further investigation.

A systematic and thorough investigation necessitates the use of appropriate research methods and analysis techniques, drawing from the approaches used by other researchers. This ensures that the investigation follows a logical sequence, rather than proceeding in a disorganized manner. Additionally, sound interpretations and conclusions must be based on existing evidence, avoiding overgeneralization. It is also crucial to acknowledge any limitations that may affect the findings. Applied linguistics research has far-reaching implications beyond academia, influencing educational practices, policy-making, and technological advancements. As Grabe (2002) notes, applied linguists play a significant role in developing language curricula, assessment tools, and policies that support multilingualism and linguistic diversity. This highlights the importance of applied linguistics in addressing global language challenges and enhancing communication in various contexts.

Theoretical Framework

ELT and applied linguistics research address practical language-related challenges by drawing on insights from fields like psychology, sociology, and computer science. ELT and applied linguistics research emphasize the importance of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to investigate language phenomena systematically. This diversity of approaches ensures a robust exploration of language teaching, language acquisition, and related real-world issues. The framework connects theoretical research with practical applications, emphasizing the role of applied linguistics in shaping language education, assessment tools, and multilingual communication strategies.

Applied Linguistics as an Interdisciplinary Field

Applied linguistics is defined as an interdisciplinary field that seeks to address practical language-related issues, including language teaching, policy-making, translation, and language assessment (Schmitt, 2010). The purpose of applied linguistics research, as explained by Brumfit (2001), is inherently problem-oriented; it aims to develop solutions to challenges in areas such as language acquisition, language loss, and the effectiveness of teaching methodologies. This research often involves drawing from various fields like psychology, sociology, and computer science to apply linguistic knowledge to practical problems in education and communication.

One key theoretical perspective in applied linguistics is that research should focus on addressing real-world problems through both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This interdisciplinary collaboration enhances the application of linguistic theories and offers a framework for

improving communication and understanding across various settings (Grabe, 2002).

Research in ELT: Systematic Exploration of Teaching and Learning

English Language Teaching (ELT) research focuses on the systematic exploration of language teaching and learning processes. The article aligns with established definitions of research as a systematic and objective analysis aimed at generating generalizations, principles, or theories (Best & Kahn, 2012). ELT research integrates both inductive and deductive approaches, allowing researchers to both analyze observed phenomena (inductive) and verify hypotheses through controlled observation and experimentation (deductive) (Gay *et al.*, 2017).

Creswell's (2016) three-step model of research—posing a question, collecting data, and presenting answers—provides a foundational theoretical model for ELT research. By focusing on these steps, ELT researchers can develop a structured inquiry process that enhances understanding of language learning. Additionally, the research in this domain supports the development of teaching materials, curriculum design, and assessment methods that are aligned with learners' needs and contextual challenges (Byram & Hu, 2013).

Methodological Diversity in Research

The article highlights the methodological diversity in applied linguistics research, recognizing the value of qualitative and quantitative methods. Researchers employ methodologies such as case studies, surveys, experimental studies, and ethnographic research to investigate language-related issues. This methodological diversity ensures a robust framework for understanding language use and acquisition across different contexts (Nunan, 1992).

The integration of both qualitative and quantitative approaches aligns with Creswell's (2016) emphasis on methodological pluralism in educational research. In applied linguistics and ELT, this diversity of methods allows researchers to address complex research questions related to language learning, teaching effectiveness, and assessment (Schmitt, 2010).

Practical Application of Linguistic Research

One of the article's central theoretical contributions is the emphasis on the practical applications of linguistic research in addressing global language challenges. According to Grabe (2002), applied linguistics research is instrumental in shaping educational practices, developing language policies, and creating language assessment tools. The article underscores the importance of aligning research findings with practical solutions in fields like language teaching and multilingual communication.

This practical approach extends beyond theoretical research and directly influences language curricula, teaching

methodologies, and language policies that promote multilingualism and linguistic diversity. This connection between theory and practice is a core aspect of applied linguistics, emphasizing the need for research that impacts real-world language use and instruction (Tollefson & Tsui, 2004).

The Objectives

The objective of the article is to provide a detailed exploration of the foundational principles, purposes, processes, and areas of research in the fields of English Language Teaching (ELT) and Applied Linguistics. The article aims to clarify key principles, such as systematic and interdisciplinary inquiry, to address practical language-related challenges. It also emphasizes the purposes of applied linguistics research, which include improving language education, shaping effective teaching methodologies, developing curriculum design, and fostering multilingual communication. The research follows a structured process, from identifying a problem, reviewing literature, collecting and analyzing data, to reporting findings. Lastly, the article explores a variety of areas within applied linguistics, including second language acquisition, language assessment, teacher education, and technology-enhanced language learning, offering comprehensive insights into how applied linguistics research contributes to both theoretical knowledge and practical applications in language education and policy-making.

Discussions

This section critically examines the scope and limitations of applied linguistics research. It underscores the importance of systematic and organized inquiry, distinguishing genuine research from mere information gathering or opinion-based processes. The section highlights the influence of various contextual factors—such as international, professional, and institutional environments—on the direction and methodology of research. It also addresses the personal biases and preconceptions researchers bring to their work, emphasizing the need for rigorous methodologies and ethical practices. By drawing from interdisciplinary fields, the discussion emphasizes the transformative and problem-solving nature of applied linguistics research in addressing real-world language challenges.

Understanding What Research Does Not Entail

The concept of "research" refers to a systematic and organized process of investigation designed to discover, interpret, or revise known facts, phenomena, behaviors, or theoretical frameworks (Taylor, 2022). This process is characterized by its methodical and rigorous approach, which is fundamental in producing reliable and valid results that contribute meaningfully to the existing body of knowledge (Kumar, 2019). However, for a comprehensive understanding of authentic research, it is crucial to also

identify what falls outside the scope of legitimate inquiry. Research is not an arbitrary or haphazard collection of information; it does not rely on anecdotal evidence or subjective interpretations not supported by empirical data (Lewis, 2020). Clarifying these limitations is essential in preserving the scientific integrity and utility of research across various disciplines, ensuring that the methodologies employed are both robust and reproducible (Green, 2021).

Research is Not Merely Gathering Information

Research is not merely about gathering information; it involves a systematic process of inquiry that seeks to interpret and analyze data to generate new knowledge. According to Creswell (2014), "research goes beyond the mere collection of data; it is about creating a structure that allows for the systematic examination of a problem, often involving the formulation of a hypothesis and the collection of evidence" (p. 4). Likewise, Burns (2010) emphasizes that research requires "critical thinking, reflection, and a well-organized approach that extends beyond the simple accumulation of facts" (p. 8). The goal of research is to contribute to a deeper understanding of a subject, which involves not just collecting information, but also synthesizing and evaluating it within a structured framework (Mertens, 2015, p. 12).

Research is Not an Opinion-Based Process

Research fundamentally differs from opinion as it is grounded in empirical evidence and systematic inquiry. Unlike opinion, which can be subjective and influenced by personal biases, research relies on data collection, analysis, and objective evaluation to arrive at conclusions (Creswell, 2014). As Creswell (2014, p. 5) emphasizes, "research involves a systematic process of inquiry to answer specific questions, employing scientific methods that are transparent and replicable." This distinction between opinion and research is critical because research aims to uncover truths or insights that can be verified and tested, rather than expressing personal beliefs or preferences.

Additionally, research is based on rigorous methodologies, which ensure the validity and reliability of findings (Silverman, 2020). Opinions, on the other hand, do not require such careful scrutiny. As Silverman (2020, p. 38) points out, "researchers must systematically collect evidence and use established frameworks to interpret their data, ensuring that conclusions are supported by the information at hand." Therefore, while opinions can offer perspectives, research demands a higher standard of proof and careful reasoning to produce meaningful and credible results. The transformative nature of research also highlights its role in advancing knowledge, shaping policy, and addressing practical challenges in society, all of which require more than mere personal viewpoints (Brew, 1999, p. 299).

Research is Not a Repetitive Reinvention

Research is a dynamic process that builds upon previous knowledge while seeking to uncover new insights. It is not merely a repetition of existing studies but an extension, refinement, or challenge to what is already known. As Creswell (2014) explains, "Research is not a process of redoing what has already been done, but rather it seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge by asking new questions and using innovative methods" (p. 17). This underscores the idea that research is progressive and aims to offer novel contributions, rather than replicating past findings without purpose.

Moreover, Borg and Gall (1989) argue that "effective research is distinguished by its ability to generate new knowledge and avoid the mere duplication of prior studies" (p. 45). This highlights the importance of creativity and originality in the research process, as scholars are encouraged to explore new avenues and perspectives. By pushing the boundaries of existing knowledge, research helps to advance fields of study and offer practical solutions to emerging problems.

Research is Not a Casual Endeavor

Research is not a casual endeavor; it requires a systematic and rigorous approach to ensure the validity and reliability of findings. As Creswell (2014) notes, "research involves a systematic process of inquiry that is planned, organized, and conducted with care" (p. 4). Unlike casual observations or opinions, research demands careful consideration of the research design, methodology, and analysis. According to Cohen *et al.* (2018), the process of research is "characterized by precision, objectivity, and control" (p. 45), which ensures that the conclusions drawn are grounded in evidence rather than subjective interpretations. Furthermore, Punch (2013) emphasizes that research involves "structured problem-solving and logical reasoning" (p. 12), making it a deliberate and thoughtful process rather than an impulsive one. Therefore, research is a disciplined pursuit of knowledge that goes beyond casual thinking or personal beliefs.

Contextual Factors in Applied Linguistics Research

Applied linguistics research operates within various contexts that influence its direction and outcomes. On an international and national level, governmental and organizational agendas often shape research priorities through control of funding. Professionally, research trends fluctuate, reflecting shifting interests within the field. Institutional contexts, such as schools and language programs, play a significant role in determining the resources and policies that affect research. Local contexts, including specific study environments like classrooms or informal settings, impact the research process. Lastly, personal contexts, including researchers' individual beliefs,

abilities, and motivations, also shape the focus and methodologies of applied linguistics research.

International and National Contexts

Applied linguistics research receives substantial support from international and national organizations, as well as governmental bodies. Given their control over financial resources, these entities' political agendas often shape the direction of research, influencing who conducts the research and the methodologies employed.

Professional Contexts

Within applied linguistics, research trends fluctuate over time. Interest in specific research approaches may surge, leading to a decline in attention to others, only for interest to later be revived. This illustrates that research, like other fields, is subject to changing trends and preferences.

Institutional Contexts

Institutional contexts in applied linguistics research encompass a wide range of settings, from entire school districts to individual language programs or even personalized tutoring scenarios. Several factors within these contexts, such as the institution's size, resource availability, policies, research history, and the personalities of key administrators and educators, can significantly affect the nature and quality of the research conducted.

Local Contexts

Local contexts pertain to the specific environments in which research is carried out. These may include classrooms, laboratories, private homes, online forums, or informal settings like coffee shops. Factors within the local context that may influence the success or failure of a study include: (a) the physical context (e.g., class size, school layout), (b) the temporal context (e.g., class duration, daily schedule), (c) social dynamics (e.g., linguistic backgrounds, ethnic diversity), (d) pedagogical factors (e.g., teaching methods, learning preferences), and (e) psychological aspects (e.g., participants' comfort levels with the research process).

Personal Contexts

Individual researchers bring their own preconceptions to applied linguistics research, including beliefs about which aspects should be studied, how research should be conducted, and their role within the research process. These views are shaped by personal differences in ability, personality, motivation, priorities, and training, which can influence the types of research that individuals or groups are inclined to pursue.

Principles of ELT and Applied Linguistics Research

Systematic and Organized Inquiry

Research in ELT and applied linguistics follows a structured approach, ensuring that data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted systematically. According to Best

and Kahn (2012), research is a “systematic and objective analysis and recording of controlled observations” (p. 25). This process includes identifying a research problem, reviewing the literature, collecting and analyzing data, and reporting findings (Creswell, 2016).

Interdisciplinary Approach

Applied linguistics draws from various disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, and computer science, to address complex language issues (Grabe, 2002). This interdisciplinary nature allows for a comprehensive exploration of language-related phenomena, which enhances practical problem-solving and the development of effective language policies and educational practices (Schmitt, 2010).

Problem-Solving Orientation

Applied linguistics is inherently problem-oriented, with the goal of finding practical solutions to language-related challenges. Brumfit (2001) highlights that applied linguistics seeks to address issues such as language acquisition, teaching methodologies, and multilingualism, making it a problem-solving discipline that aims for real-world impact.

Methodological Pluralism

A key principle in ELT and applied linguistics research is the integration of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Creswell (2016) emphasizes the importance of methodological pluralism, where multiple approaches such as case studies, surveys, and experiments are employed to address research questions comprehensively.

Theory-Practice Connection

Research in applied linguistics bridges the gap between theory and practice. It informs curriculum development, assessment tools, and language policy, ensuring that research findings have a direct impact on real-world language teaching and learning (Tollefson & Tsui, 2004). This connection is critical in shaping educational practices that are grounded in empirical research.

Data-Driven Decisions

The use of empirical data is central to ELT and applied linguistics research. Gay *et al.* (2017) argue that research should involve the “systematic application of the scientific method” (p. 5), which includes data collection, analysis, and interpretation to make informed decisions about language education.

Focus on Language Learning and Teaching

ELT research is primarily concerned with improving the effectiveness of language teaching and learning. Researchers explore various teaching methodologies, curriculum designs, and assessment practices to enhance language acquisition and learner outcomes (Richards, 2001).

Ethical and Responsible Research Practices

Ethical considerations are fundamental in conducting research. Researchers are expected to maintain integrity, honesty, and transparency in their work, ensuring that findings are valid, reliable, and contribute positively to the field (Brown & Combe, 2015).

Purposes of Applied Linguistics Research

The primary purpose of applied linguistics research is to address real-world language-related issues by applying theoretical knowledge to practical problems. This field of research is focused on improving language learning, teaching, and assessment, as well as enhancing communication in diverse social and cultural contexts. According to Cook (2003), applied linguistics seeks to “find solutions to practical language problems” (p. 5), including challenges related to second language acquisition, bilingual education, and language policy. By identifying and analyzing the factors that influence language use, applied linguistics research provides evidence-based recommendations for improving language instruction and curriculum development.

This includes the examination of pedagogical techniques, curriculum design, and assessment methods to enhance language proficiency and literacy. Another significant purpose of applied linguistics is to facilitate communication across cultural boundaries, which is increasingly important in our globalized world. This aspect of research often focuses on translation and interpretation, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics to address the challenges of intercultural communication (Byram & Hu, 2013). Researchers work on developing tools and strategies to overcome language barriers and promote effective communication in multilingual settings, including workplaces, communities, and international relations.

In addition to its educational applications, applied linguistics research contributes to broader societal and policy-oriented goals. Grabe (2002) emphasizes that applied linguists play a crucial role in developing language policies and assessment tools that promote linguistic diversity and multilingualism (p. 39). This research also informs language-related decision-making in various fields, such as healthcare, legal systems, and technology development. Ultimately, applied linguistics research aims to enhance communication in multilingual environments and provide practical solutions to language-related challenges across different domains of life.

Applied linguistics research serves several important purposes in understanding and improving the use of language in real-world contexts. Partridge and Phakiti (2015) list the aims of applied linguistics researches as follows:

- i. To gain basic knowledge or theory about language learning or use (e.g. first, second, third, bilingualism, multilingualism) generally or in a specific context or for a specific purpose.
- ii. To confirm existing knowledge, theories or ideas about language learning, use or problems through the gathering of empirical evidence.
- iii. To understand the roles of individuals and real-world contexts affecting the nature of language learning or use generally or in a particular context.
- iv. To address problems in language learning, use or communication worldwide (e.g. in particular sociopolitical contexts, or in relation to educational policies and practices).
- v. To assess or evaluate a situation involving language learning or use such as language teaching, language testing and assessment, language program evaluation, translation, discourse and conversation analysis.

To reduce or minimize issues concerning unfairness or inequality among people due to language and language-related issues and barriers.

The Research Cycle

Research is a structured process involving the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data to enhance our understanding of a particular phenomenon of interest or concern. Similarly, individuals frequently apply systematic methods when gathering and interpreting information to address everyday challenges. The research process in ELT and Applied Linguistics entails six steps (Creswell, 2016, p.7):

- i. Identifying a research problem
- ii. Reviewing the literature
- iii. Specifying a purpose for research
- iv. Collecting data
- v. Analyzing and interpreting the data
- vi. Reporting and evaluating research

The research cycle in applied linguistics and ELT follows a systematic process that includes identifying a research problem, reviewing literature, specifying the purpose of research, collecting and analyzing data, and reporting findings (Nunan, 1992). This model is fundamental to ensuring that research is conducted in a structured, reliable, and valid manner.

The article discusses the importance of careful planning and organization in research. This reflects a commitment to sound methodology, where researchers must critically analyze data and draw conclusions that are well-supported by evidence. By ensuring that research follows a logical sequence, researchers contribute to building a strong theoretical foundation for the field (Brew, 1999).

Identifying a Research Problem

Identifying a research problem is a fundamental step in the research process within ELT and Applied Linguistics. This step involves recognizing a gap in the current literature or an issue that requires further investigation, which serves as the foundation for formulating research questions and objectives. As Burns (2010) notes, "A research problem is the starting point for any study, and it should be significant, researchable, and relevant to the field" (p. 45). In ELT and Applied Linguistics, this could include challenges such as language acquisition, instructional methods, assessment practices, or sociocultural factors affecting language learning. By carefully identifying a problem, researchers ensure that their study contributes meaningfully to the existing body of knowledge and addresses real-world issues (Richards, 2015, p. 12). Furthermore, Brown (2014) emphasizes that a well-defined research problem should not only highlight the need for inquiry but also clarify how the research will contribute to both theory and practice (p. 89). Thus, identifying a research problem is not merely a preliminary task but a critical aspect that shapes the entire research design and approach.

Reviewing the Literature

Reviewing the literature can be defined as "locating summaries, books, journals, and indexed publications on a topic; selectively choosing which literature to include in your review; and then summarizing the literature in a written report" (Creswell, 2016, p. 9). As Mackey and Gass (2015) note, "the review of the literature allows researchers to position their work within the broader scholarly conversation, ensuring that it builds on or addresses gaps in the existing research" (p. 34). The function of the literature review is to provide background information on the research question, and to identify what others have said and/or discovered about the question (Nunan, 1992). Conducting a comprehensive literature study will familiarize you with prior research in the topic and also highlight any issues or prospective challenges in the chosen area.

Specifying a Purpose for Research

The purpose of research is to determine the main focus or objective of a study and refine it into particular research questions or hypotheses. The purpose statement encompasses the primary emphasis of the study, the individuals involved in the study, and the specific place or site of the investigation. Subsequently, this objective statement is refined into specific research questions or hypotheses that you intend to address in your research investigation. The purpose serves as the foundation for determining research questions, methodology, and data analysis. Creswell (2014) emphasizes that "the purpose statement provides the major objective or intent of the study" (p. 114), shaping the direction and scope of the research. In applied linguistics, this could involve exploring

practical issues such as language teaching methodologies, language acquisition, or curriculum design.

Collecting Data

The processes in the data collection process include identifying and selecting study participants, obtaining their consent to be investigated, and gathering information through questioning or behavioral observation. The ability to collect exact data from people and locations is critical to this process. This step will produce data in the form of words (responses, opinions, quotes) or numbers (test scores, frequency of behavior). After locating these people and sites, you include technique or procedure sections in your study papers.

Analyzing and Interpreting the Data

Analyzing and interpreting the data involves drawing conclusions about it; representing it in tables, figures, and pictures to summarize it; and explaining the conclusions in words to provide answers to your research questions. You report analysis and interpretation in sections of a research report usually titled Results, Findings, or Discussions.

Reporting and Evaluating Research

Upon completing your research, you will compile a written report and disseminate it to specific target groups (such as colleagues, administrators, parents, and students) who can benefit from the knowledge. Reporting research include selecting target audiences, organizing the report in a format that meets the expectations of these audiences, and subsequently composing the report in a manner that is considerate of all readers. The target audience for research can range from academic researchers who contribute to and read scholarly articles, to faculty advisors and committees responsible for reviewing master's theses and dissertations, to individuals in educational agencies and educational organizations who seek reports on research pertaining to current concerns.

Evaluating Research

Evaluating Research entails evaluating the quality of a study using criteria established by experts in the field of education. Regrettably, there is a lack of definitive criteria for assessing educational research across the academic research community. The Fig. 1 illustrates the cycle procedure (Pandey, 2024, P. 12) that is employed in applied linguistics and ELT research:



Fig. 1: Cycle procedure showing research process (adapted from Pandey, 2024).

Areas of ELT Research

English Language Teaching (ELT) is a diverse field that covers multiple research areas, all of which significantly contribute to the understanding and enhancement of language education. A central focus is Second Language Acquisition (SLA), which explores how individuals learn a second language, examining factors such as innate linguistic ability, age, and the effects of immersive versus classroom-based environments (Ellis, 2008). Another important area is Curriculum and Syllabus Design, where researchers analyze the effectiveness of various syllabi-structural, functional, and task-based-on achieving desired learning outcomes, directly impacting classroom practices worldwide (Richards, 2001). The increasing role of Technology in ELT is also critical, with studies investigating how digital tools, such as virtual classrooms and language learning apps, enhance language acquisition, alongside examining potential drawbacks like reduced face-to-face interaction (Chapelle, 2003). Teacher Education and Development is essential for improving instructional quality, focusing on the effectiveness of teacher training programs and how teachers' beliefs and practices influence student learning (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Lastly, Assessment and Evaluation in ELT centers on how language proficiency is measured, addressing the development of valid and fair language assessments and their impact on teaching practices (Bachman & Palmer, 2010). Collectively, these areas highlight the breadth of research in ELT, each contributing uniquely to the field's advancement.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

SLA is a fundamental area of applied linguistics research that examines how individuals acquire a second language. Researchers investigate the cognitive, social, and environmental factors that influence language learning. According to Gass and Selinker (2008), SLA research "seeks to describe how learners acquire a second language and to explain that process" (p. 1). This area also addresses various factors such as age, motivation, and the quality of language input.

Language Pedagogy

Research in this area focuses on the methods and approaches used in language teaching. It encompasses various instructional techniques, from grammar-translation to communicative language teaching. Richards and Rodgers (2014) note that "the study of teaching methods is fundamental to the field of language pedagogy, shaping the ways in which teachers plan and deliver instruction" (p. 5). Researchers examine how different teaching methods impact language acquisition and learner engagement.

Curriculum Development and Materials Design

This area explores the principles and processes involved in creating effective language curricula and instructional

materials. Tomlinson (2011) asserts that "materials development is a sub-field of applied linguistics that provides practical insights into the production of resources that are pedagogically appropriate and culturally relevant" (p. 2). Researchers in this field focus on designing resources that cater to learners' needs and align with the broader curriculum objectives.

Language Assessment and Testing

Another key area of ELT and applied linguistics research is language assessment, which evaluates learners' proficiency and performance. Fulcher and Davidson (2007) emphasize that "language testing research addresses issues of validity, reliability, and fairness in the design of tests that measure linguistic competence" (p. 4). This area also investigates the broader social consequences of language testing and its role in shaping educational policy.

Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis

Pragmatics examines how meaning is conveyed in context, while discourse analysis explores the structure of language in use. Levinson (1983) defines pragmatics as "the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalized, or encoded in the structure of a language" (p. 9). This area of research is vital for understanding how social and cultural contexts influence language use and interpretation.

Sociolinguistics and Language Policy

Sociolinguistics studies the relationship between language and society, while language policy research examines how language is governed at institutional and societal levels. Spolsky (2004) argues that "language policy research investigates how decisions about language affect social practices, multilingualism, and language rights" (p. 5). This area is essential for understanding the broader implications of language use and planning in society.

Conclusions

The role of applied linguistics and English Language Teaching (ELT) research lies in addressing and resolving practical language-related challenges. The objective of applied linguistics is emphasized as a problem-oriented field focused on providing solutions for issues such as language acquisition, language loss, and the effectiveness of teaching methodologies. The primary goal of the article is to outline the principles, processes, and practices that guide research in applied linguistics and ELT. By integrating interdisciplinary insights from fields like psychology, sociology, and computer science, the article emphasizes the importance of a systematic and rigorous approach to research. This structured process aims to contribute to both theoretical knowledge and practical applications in language education, shaping teaching strategies, assessment tools, and language policies to improve educational outcomes across diverse contexts.

Furthermore, the article underscores the practical applications of research findings in enhancing language curricula, improving language assessment tools, and fostering multilingual communication. It highlights the importance of aligning research with educational practices to meet the needs of diverse linguistic contexts. By focusing on empirical evidence and methodological rigor, applied linguistics research not only contributes to theoretical knowledge but also has far-reaching implications for improving communication and addressing language-related issues globally. This reinforces the significance of a structured research approach in generating socially useful knowledge and advancing the field of language education.

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